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Taylor's Role

Outwardly at least, appointment of Gen. Maxwell Taylor as a sort of liaison man between the President and the Pentagon—CIA complex has been well received. But as initial praise of the appointment passes and more attention is directed to the duties he is supposed to perform, more and more persons are publicly asking, what is his job?

Liaison duties between the White House and the military-intelligence wings of government are hardly appropriate for the man who is now one of the President's top advisers. General Taylor is a four-star officer with an excellent military career and a reputation for strong personal direction. He is not one to reject responsibility nor assume the comfortable role of confidant.

Uneasiness over how such a man can fit into what at first appeared to be primarily advisory duties has led more than one Pentagon official and member of Congress to the conclusion that the appointment of General Taylor is the beginning, not the end.

President Kennedy has made no secret of his lack of confidence in both the Pentagon and the CIA since the Cuban invasion disaster. This shaken confidence could result in a strong military member in the President's "kitchen cabinet" upon whom he would depend heavily for off-the-record advice.

Or, as has been suggested, General Taylor's position may be no more than a training period leading eventually to the CIA post now held by Allen Dulles. A third possibility is what most troubles observers waiting to see what happens next.

It is that the presidential adviser appointment is the first step to a major overhaul of the Defense Department, which could lead to a request to Congress to abolish the Joint Chiefs of Staff in favor of a single military head.

General Taylor has advocated such sweeping reorganization in the past. But whichever of these avenues the President has in mind, he is opening a door to malcontent and disunity in the military high command at a time when greater coordination and cooperation are required.